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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 10 *(continued)*

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/54/1)

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: The reason for the early adjournment of yesterday's meeting would seem to be a symbolic call to reality.

I wish to express my appreciation for the convening of this meeting and for the opportunity offered us by the Secretary-General through the presentation of his report and his statement at the opening of the general debate. As seen without exception in the preceding statements, all of us share the urgency of holding an in-depth discussion and of guiding the United Nations in this era of neo-interventionism under humanitarian pretexts.

There is no country with a greater will for change than Cuba, nor with a greater vocation and boldness, for confronting old and new problems, the solutions to which seem ever farther away for humankind rather than closer. No people could embody a better example of optimism and confidence in the future than our people. This is not a question of meeting the challenges of globalization and modernity with stereotypes from the past. No country has changed more since 1959 or sought to change this unsustainable and unjust world order with more courage and dedication than Cuba. But we believe it is necessary to do so with straightforward political realism, without avoiding painful truths.

Does anyone in this Hall believe that they might read on the Internet or in a newspaper in the foreseeable future that a South-East Asian country has requested or received a mandate from the Security Council to intervene, without the consent of the White House, in a civil conflict in Michigan that the White House has been unable to control, a conflict resulting from wild actions of the famous local militias?

Are we discussing how a coalition of African countries might intervene under the United Nations Charter in some European country, against the will of a far-right Government that, in a context of growing xenophobic feelings, is oppressing immigrants or its own minorities?

Is the goal of this debate perhaps to determine how the United Nations could intervene in the world's largest drug market and drug-use centre?

Or is it to discuss how to prevent someone with a nuclear briefcase and thousands of nuclear warheads from launching, in an act of irresponsible arrogance or fleeting madness, a number of missiles, conventional or otherwise?

I wish that the unjust, unsustainable and tyrannical world order endured by the countries of the South could be redesigned by a working group or changed by a decision of the General Assembly. As a matter of fact, we in this Hall know quite enough about unfulfilled agreements, empty promises and thwarted hopes.

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The Secretary-General has asked critical questions and has hit a raw nerve. It is now the responsibility of the Member States to give him a clear and prompt mandate to prevent dark and powerful hegemonic interests from continuing to gain ground in the real world while we are busy writing documents. We run the risk of being confronted with faits accomplis.

The developing countries' dilemma is whether or not, in the future, under certain circumstances and procedures, to continue to allow themselves to be subject to intervention by a handful of Powers that monopolize the necessary economic and military capability, which is the result of realities that are not determined in this Hall.

Cuba wishes to state that there will never be any intervention in Cuba, under any pretext or circumstances whatsoever, because that is the sovereign will of its people. Our people have already faced one risk of nuclear intervention, as Che Guevara explained in this Hall, 35 years ago, and now face daily attempts at intervention by the super-Power 90 miles off our coast.

This interpretation and exercise of sovereignty will not allow itself to be mutilated, and it is what we wish for all.

We understand the reality of a globalized world and will work hard towards the globalization of justice, development and solidarity. But under conditions of a unipolar and neo-liberal world order; under the economic and military dictatorship of a super-Power; and given the imposition of a single model, the nuclear club, the offensive military doctrine of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the so-called global threats, countries being relegated to the "Euro-Atlantic periphery", the financial blackmail against the United Nations, the tyranny of some permanent members of the Security Council and the Council's double standards; the crippling of the General Assembly; and the ways that political selectivity and manipulation applied to human rights issues — in view of all this, it would be suicidal to endorse the right to global intervention that has already been exercised in Kosovo.

We are not calling on the international community or the United Nations to remain impassive and inactive in the face of genocide and other crimes. On the contrary, we are yet again demanding from this rostrum that the United Nations take resolute and urgent action to find just and lasting solutions to the ever-increasing number of conflicts. The General Assembly must take urgent action and must expressly and directly mandate the Secretary-General to take immediate steps.

History eloquently shows that peace cannot be imposed by force or by war, and that military operations do not lead to lasting solutions. Unless we improve the living conditions of the four fifths of humanity who suffer from underdevelopment and poverty; unless we are able to rescue 1.3 billion from extreme poverty; unless we can prevent the deaths of the 8 million children who die every year before they reach their first birthday and of the 19 million children under the age of five who die every year from curable diseases and malnutrition; unless we can feed the 900 million hungry people; unless we can cure the 23 million AIDS-infected Africans; unless we can teach the 1 billion illiterate human beings to read and write — unless we do all this, conflicts will continue.

Unless we stop the irresponsible printing of dollars and the financial speculation that in just a few hours wipes out the reserves built up by countries over long years of sacrifice; unless the industrial countries' financial institutions become as transparent as ours are required to be; unless the International Monetary Fund stops imposing inhumane structural adjustment programmes; unless the United Nations and its development infrastructure are saved from assault and subjugation by the Bretton Woods institutions; unless a new socially oriented financial architecture is created; unless the market's blind madness is curbed; unless transnationals are prevented from gaining increasing control over our economies; unless the weakening and shrinking of Governments is halted; unless the first world's commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of its gross national product for official development assistance is fulfilled; unless the imposition at all costs of liberalizing policies that are not even followed by the first world is stopped; and unless the opulent societies' irrational consumption at the expense of our poverty is curbed — conflicts will continue.

Conflicts will continue as long as the North continues to impose an imperfect and environmentally and economically unsustainable political model that may, perhaps, work in the North — a model reached after centuries of absolute monarchies, without free or just elections, without universal suffrage, without women having the vote, without eight-hour work days, without what today is called "good governance", though this concept has yet to be defined or agreed on by anybody. We refuse to sanctify a model in which there is little participation, much abstention, little popular credibility and widespread commercialization of politics. Unless the imposition of cultures and artificial borders by colonial Powers is recognized as an essential historical factor in

many current conflicts and unless the right to independence and self-determination is accepted and the diversity of cultures and models comprehended, conflicts will continue.

If there is a continued expectation of the disintegration of States and unless it is firmly accepted that existing borders are inviolable, conflicts will continue. If the political manipulation of human rights continues — the selectivity, partiality and double standards; if economic and social rights are ignored; if the right to development is disregarded; if a sectarian and abstract international human rights law is imposed; and if all human rights are not guaranteed for all human beings — conflicts will continue.

In order to act, the United Nations needs urgently to democratize itself. The General Assembly must resolutely exercise its powers, even in the field of conflicts. According to the Charter, the United Nations means of acting in cases of conflicts do not end with the broad powers of the Security Council but rather with the General Assembly, where there is no room for the politics of global or regional hegemony, where there is no obsolete veto right, where everyone has a voice and a vote.

The Security Council must be expanded and provide equitable representation for developing countries. The veto must disappear, or at least for now be restricted to Chapter VII of the Charter. The observance of double standards must stop. The Council's excesses must be averted and its shortcomings redressed. It is imperative to support the Council's legitimate authority and to prevent this authority from being violated, ignored and manipulated.

The pre-eminence, absolute validity and inviolability of the Charter must be restored through deeds. The Charter is not just another source of law but the cornerstone of the United Nations and of what remains of the precarious international legal regime. It is the foundation of the collective-security system devised by humankind to prevent, avoid and resolve conflicts.

We do not accept the idea of "diplomacy backed up by force" or the idea of "diplomacy based on the use of force", attempts to impose diplomacy by firepower. In our opinion, so-called humanitarian interventions, as tried out in Kosovo, are simply violations of the Charter and of international law. The United Nations Charter very clearly defines the conditions in which the United Nations may undertake acts of force for the sake of maintaining international peace and security. Cuba categorically rejects any act of force that is not in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. There can be no justification whatsoever for such acts.

To disguise interference and interventionism by describing them as "humanitarian" not only is unacceptable, it also distorts the legal framework that we have adopted at the United Nations with regard to genuine humanitarian assistance. It is self-evident that the concept of so-called humanitarian intervention is not enshrined in any of the Charter's provisions. Therefore, we wonder if it is contained in some proposed amendment to the Charter. If this is the case, the Organization has a set procedure that must be observed. This procedure which includes, among other basic requirements, discussion and decision-making with the participation of all Member States.

Some people's well-known tactic of trying to surreptitiously impose concepts foreign to the Charter by taking advantage, in their own interests, of any small loopholes they find in the United Nations mechanisms for policy planning and implementation cannot be accepted in this Organization.

We agree with many of our colleagues on the importance of creating a culture of prevention at the United Nations. Now, the first step must be the reaching of a mutual understanding between us all on the scope of and the practical implications and methods to be applied in creating such a culture.

It would also be unquestionably appropriate to create adequate early-warning instruments against the emergence of phenomena that might evolve into conflicts, but it would be unacceptable that they be established through mechanisms available almost exclusively to the industrialized countries for obtaining information on the rest of the world at their own convenience. For some years now, proposals have been submitted to us that, in actuality, could only be prelude to the most obvious and blatant interference.

Preventive diplomacy is much touted, but in practice we are not told what exactly is being sought by it. We wonder what the difference is between this concept and the mediation or good offices that are historically and by definition carried out by the Secretaries-General of this Organization. The fact that the name is now being changed tells us the extent to which the concepts have also been substantively changed. I think this Assembly deserves to know what those changes are.

Little is said about the principle of consent, and too much about the imposition of peace, without taking into account the fact that, in a world where justice and equity prevail, peace is not to be imposed, but rather to be attained through development, equal opportunities for every citizen, the absence of corruption and the guarantee of genuine participation by the people in designing its own destiny.

In conclusion, there is no excuse whatsoever for violating the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. Such principles constitute the developing countries' only guarantee of being able to defend their independence by legal means. Only the Security Council has the power under the Charter to impose measures that entail the use of force. The use of force in any other circumstance is illegal and illegitimate. The United Nations Charter also provides mechanisms that allow the General Assembly to adopt decisions and actions even when the Security Council is unable to act. Every nation has the right to develop its own models of political order and economic and social development. Any imposition of foreign models is illegitimate. The use of double standards is not permissible.

Cuba asserts its support for the United Nations and its overall reform. In the context of this unshakable understanding, Cuba supports courageous, honourable, legitimate and prompt measures. We will never exploit these measures to justify the use and abuse of power and force by a few hegemonic Powers or to destroy our sovereignty and the principles that guarantee it. We will use them, rather, to resolve the deep-rooted causes of such actions, such as the dramatic phenomena behind the sort of human tragedies that have occurred in certain regions of our tormented world. History shall not forgive our inaction or our slowness.

Ms. Ramiro-Lopez (Philippines): I wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his statement and for his report contained in document A/54/1, which provide us with a comprehensive overview of the work of the United Nations. The report reflects the increasingly multifaceted tasks which we Member States have entrusted to the Organization and provides us with thought-provoking ideas which deserve in-depth consideration and examination.

The world, in continuous transition, challenges the United Nations today. Without negating the benefits that changes and shifts in international politics have brought our generation, the international community remains preoccupied with the unending crusade to achieve peace and development, to protect human rights, to promote the rule of law and to fight injustice and crime. Now more than ever, as the millennium creeps slowly upon us, the United Nations is staring at the challenge to achieve unprecedented creativity in order to reaffirm the principles of its founding Charter.

But the United Nations needs to critically assess its performance and even rethink many of its established ways of conducting its business to pursue the Charter principles. There can be no substitute, at this time or in the near future, to the central role of the United Nations for meeting the many demands of a world in transition. Its Member States should make a determined effort to help evolve a modern, efficient and reformed world body to carry out the multidimensional responsibilities it is assigned by the international community.

The first and foremost of these responsibilities is the maintenance of international peace and security. At the end of the century, the United Nations is once more emerging as a major player, as is evident through the many requests for its intervention in many crisis situations. The Security Council is the primary organ tasked to carry out such responsibilities, but, as has been previously noted, its elitist structure and decision-making process — which has been and could still continue to be vulnerable to vetoes — cast doubts on the ability of the Security Council to represent the international community and not just the influential members of the Security Council. This consideration makes it more urgent for the United Nations to seriously reform the working methods of the Council and enable it to respond more rapidly to crisis situations.

One of the most important issues addressed in the Secretary-General's report is the concept of humanitarian intervention and its impact on traditional concepts of sovereignty in the light of the many crises and complex humanitarian situations confronting our world today. Today, the nature of conflicts has changed; their effects and their causes are more complex and far-reaching.

What seems to be envisioned now is a more intrusive role for the United Nations, one that is not limited to facilitating a compromise political settlement among contending parties, but that includes the resolution of certain underlying causes of conflicts, the setting-up of conditions for political participation, such as elections, the training of civil servants and the police, and the strengthening of democratic institutions, among others. In

more serious cases, the United Nations may even assume part of the governmental administration. Because of their inherent orientation towards the deep-seated structural causes of conflicts and violence and to the fundamental reforms and more permanent solutions to these conflicts, preventive diplomacy and peace-building interventions would tend to involve the United Nations far more deeply than before in the internal affairs of States. Needless to say, these eventualities have been a cause of concern to many countries. The controversy is likely to persist as the meaning of national and state sovereignty in the present undergoes unpredictable permutations.

My delegation's views on this issue were clearly articulated in the statement of my Foreign Secretary, delivered at the 21st meeting, on 1 October, in the general debate of the present session. He said:

> "State sovereignty is important; it will always be. So is individual sovereignty. That the redefinition of one should coincide with the renewed consciousness of the other is, to my delegation, not an accident. These developments need not even be seen as parallel, as if they do not meet; for in truth, they converge.
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> "But we agree with the Secretary-General that the more important question is how the United Nations — the only truly universal, if imperfect, arm of the international community — is to respond to the political, human rights and humanitarian crises affecting so much of the world. We have to be more innovative in our approaches to problems relating to massive and systematic human rights violations. We agree that empowering the United Nations enough to match its Charter mandates in today's and tomorrow's world requires that we, the Member States, update our concept of national interest."

On the question of the United Nations, regional organizations and security, we agree with the Secretary-General that it is necessary and desirable to provide support for regional and subregional arrangements and initiatives on matters of international peace and security. The United Nations, lacking the capacity, resources and expertise to address all issues unique to each region of the world, should complement rather than supplant regional peace efforts.

The humanitarian challenges referred to in the Secretary-General's report are one of the central concerns of my Government. Providing assistance to the victims of conflict is a moral imperative and must be pursued as a complement to measures aimed at conflict resolution. While humanitarian assistance is an immediate response, it is at the same time a necessary step towards full recovery, rehabilitation and development. Humanitarian aid should not only be devoid of any semblance of politics, but must also, as much as possible, lay the initial but firm foundation for post-conflict growth. It should at the same time fully respect the sovereignty of recipient countries; they must be consulted and their full consent must be secured.

We are happy to note that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has exerted its best efforts to ensure coordinated inter-agency responses to various humanitarian emergencies. Timely humanitarian action is required to minimize further loss of lives and deterioration in living conditions. It is therefore critical that relief assistance be mobilized immediately and dispatched to places requiring urgent attention. In this regard, it is very important that needs assessment be undertaken without unnecessary delay so that prospective donors are provided with information to enable them to react quickly to the appeal.

Attacks on humanitarian personnel continue to pose major problems in humanitarian assistance. In this regard, all efforts must be exerted by countries, particularly the host countries, to ensure the safety of all personnel involved in humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian emergencies often are complex situations, requiring the involvement of those willing and in a position to provide help. Inter-agency cooperation and coordination, particularly at sites where humanitarian assistance is required, must ensure the involvement of other international and local actors, such as non-governmental organizations, community organizations, religious groups and other private-sector groups.

Very early on we realized that legal instruments of a general nature would not be sufficient to address the issue of human rights. The Organization lost no time in filling this gap. Today, we have legal human rights instruments that cover virtually all areas. But more needs to be done.

In his report, the Secretary-General emphasizes a tragic fact: human rights are flouted wantonly across the globe, and genocide, mass killings, arbitrary and summary execution, torture, disappearances, enslavement, discrimination, widespread debilitating

poverty and the persecution of minorities still have to be stamped out.

Not only do we need to conclude normative instruments for all other areas of human rights, but we also have to strengthen the implementation and compliance regimes of existing ones. A step in this direction is the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Many difficult issues involving sensitive matters faced the negotiators, but to their credit, and with the help of the Secretary-General, many of these issues were resolved. We are now in the process of drafting implementing rules. These difficulties are now less a problem, and I am confident that the Preparatory Commission drafting these rules will be successful in its task.

The Philippines welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General in reforming the Organization through improved efficiency and a human resources management strategy that promotes managerial excellence and accountability. We appreciate the contributions made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in its five years of existence, in increasing management accountability within the Organization.

The Philippines notes the intention of the Secretary-General to place savings derived from efficiency measures in the development account and make them available for additional projects. While we supported the establishment of the development account, we stressed that the transfer of resources associated with productivity gains to the development account should not be a budget reduction exercise, should not result in involuntary separation of staff and should not affect the full implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. We regret that discussions on the modalities for the operation and sustainability of the development account have not been concluded. We hope that this can be concluded soon.

The Philippines notes with serious concern, in paragraph 294 of the report, the continuing critical financial situation of the United Nations, which hampers the ability of the Organization to implement the mandated programmes and activities in an efficient and effective manner. We heard the other day from the Under-Secretary-General for Management on the grim prospects for reimbursing countries that provide troops and equipment to various peacekeeping operations, many of which are developing countries, unless a significant arrearage payment is received from Member States, notably from a major contributor. We believe that the only viable solution to the persistent financial crisis of the United Nations is for all Members, in particular the major contributor, to settle their arrears without further delay and to pay their future assessments in full, on time and without conditions.

Mr. Wouters (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for drawing up and presenting on 20 September the report we are considering today in the General Assembly. The decision to introduce the report in a plenary meeting at the outset of the general debate is a positive innovation allowing for a tighter focusing of the ministerial debate. The document is of unquestionable interest. The description of the Organization's activities allow us to better place the role and the action of our Organization in the light of the major transformations taking place throughout the world. In addition, the report provides an opportunity for the Secretary-General to identify the major events and challenges of the year and to add oral interpretations or conclusions, as he has done by raising the issue of humanitarian intervention. Several speakers have referred to this, and earlier we heard a procedural proposal presented by the Permanent Representative of Egypt.

The most important message of the report, in our view, is the conclusion that the forces of globalization and international cooperation continue to require in-depth adaptation of the Organization, as well as great readiness on the part of the Secretary-General to restore to the Organization the central role in international life it deserves.

When the Secretary-General declares:

(*spoke in English*)

> "I have made it my highest duty to restore the United Nations to its rightful role in the pursuit of peace and security, and to bring it closer to the peoples it serves" *(A/54/PV.4)*.

(*spoke in French*)

my delegation fully supports him in this regard and in his efforts designed to transform the United Nations into a more simple, integrated and more highly focused organization capable of carrying out its mission in its various areas of activities with a maximum of synergy and efficiency.

The remarks of the Secretary-General deserve our support all the more because they come within the context of an overall restructuring initiative aimed at

adapting the entire Organization to the demands of the modern world. That process requires the firm commitment of all Member States and a collective, rapid and unequivocal response. The Secretary-General clearly indicates the areas and especially the crises in which the responses of the international community have been flawed, fragmented or characterized by a narrow view of the interests at stake. A better idea of the general interest and a better adherence to the Charter values will enable us to see more clearly the global role of the Organization in the prevention of conflicts and put us in a better position to develop the essential links between political tasks and the development work of the United Nations and to ensure progress in respect for human rights and international law, as a key element of our Organization.

Five other aspects of the report should be emphasized. First, we have, sadly, witnessed the dire consequences of natural disasters which have hit the Caribbean, Turkey, Greece, Taiwan, the Bahamas, India, Bangladesh, China and so many other countries in various regions. We share the grief and mourn the victims, and we will continue to show our solidarity in a concrete way. The Secretary-General was right to draw our attention to the need to further develop and better equip early warning systems, thus allowing us to better respond to these situations.

Secondly, as the Secretary-General has noted, the new global environment requires more systematic cooperation between the United Nations and all other actors engaged in promoting political and economic security at all levels, whether regional organizations or even non-State protagonists. In this connection, we welcome the progress made in the dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, encouraged by the Economic and Social Council.

Thirdly, the Secretary-General also emphasizes the extreme seriousness of the United Nations financial situation. The financial health of the Organization has not improved over the last 12 months. Belgium believes that those States which are in arrears are doing considerable harm to the international community as a whole. The damage exceeds the loss of income caused by the accumulated debts, because our Organization is prevented from fully carrying out its mandate. This situation is dangerously complicating the reform exercise now under way. No penalty or sanction could redress the harm caused to international cooperation and social progress.

Fourthly, reform of the Security Council is also required by the comprehensive reform of this Organization. This delicate matter must be judged on its merits. It is necessary to avoid both unproductive confrontation and the indefinite postponement of this fundamental aspect of reform.

Fifthly, promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Africa is an important theme of the report. Many speakers in the general debate pleaded for a more active and more generous policy by our Organization towards the African continent, so sorely tried and tested. My country fully supports this appeal, and will play its role in the collective effort.

The report of the Secretary-General deals with a host of other issues which I have not enlarged on. I merely wished to emphasize those which seemed to me to be crucial. That in no way diminishes the importance of other aspects of the report. The report itself provides a frame of reference which is most useful for the action of the United Nations and for the work of this session of our Assembly.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and express the hope that he will follow the same procedure next year for the presentation of the report.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): The Secretary-General's introduction to his report on the work of the Organization deals with the humanitarian challenge. And his remarks here at the opening of the general debate focused on the prospects for human security and intervention in the next century.

From the outset, I want to pay tribute, on behalf of the Government of Sweden, to the way in which Secretary-General Annan has addressed these vital issues. Because they are vital to us in the General Assembly, as well as for the members of the Security Council, and for our entire Organization. They are vital for the Governments that we represent. And, above all, they are vital for all individuals, around the world, whose security — and even survival — is threatened by humanitarian catastrophes.

We have seen many examples of such catastrophes in this past year. One was the violence in East Timor, by forces that refused to accept the rules of democracy, which led to extensive destruction in a Territory that should have been allowed to start its road to independence in peace. Another example was the "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo, which forced close to a million people to leave their homes, their villages, and often their

own family members. There is another horrific example, which I will never forget: the children in Sierra Leone, thousands of them mutilated by the rebels, abducted from their parents, forced to use drugs, used as child soldiers, and suffering from the worst mistreatment.

The United Nations was founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The security of each Member State was then at the centre of attention. And the Charter established a system for collective security. Never again, it was said, would a State be attacked by another State without the rest of the world coming to its rescue.

But security is not only a matter for States. Security is also a need for individuals. Far too many people on this planet are subject to persecution and oppression and live under circumstances that threaten their lives. As fellow human beings, we cannot ignore this, even if it occurs across a border, in another State. The important principle of national sovereignty cannot be used as a curtain behind which gross violations of human rights are carried out with impunity.

It is the view of my Government that the security of the individual must be regarded as being as important as the security of States. These two objectives are intertwined. The long-term security of a State depends upon the security and well-being of its inhabitants. And much too often, in the past, the security of the State has been used as an excuse or pretext for actions that undermined the security of its people.

The Secretary-General spoke eloquently in this Hall on 20 September about the collective conscience of humanity — a conscience that abhors cruelty, renounces injustice and seeks peace for all peoples, as he said. To us, that conscience also implies an obligation for the international community to take action in situations where the security of people is imperilled.

The United Nations is the obvious forum for dealing with such situations. Therefore, much more must be done to make the United Nations able to rise to that challenge, first of all in the field of preventing conflicts. My Foreign Minister announced in the general debate that her Government had adopted an action programme that we hope can help to change the focus, from crisis management to early preventive action. And let us not forget that the United Nations already has at its disposal several instruments for preventive diplomacy, which should be used more frequently.

First of all, there is a need to address the root causes of conflict. This includes eradicating poverty, achieving sustainable development and promoting human rights and good governance worldwide. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity to bring relief to victims of natural disasters and of armed conflict, and to do more to prevent emergencies from arising.

It is perhaps easy to agree on that. But the more difficult question is how the international community should treat violent disputes if they occur entirely within a country. How do we deal with the dilemma of wanting to respect each nation's sovereignty while seeking to improve human security everywhere? Or, more precisely, should the fact that a humanitarian catastrophe occurs within the borders of a State automatically hinder the Organization from taking action? We think not.

As the Permanent Representative of Singapore said in this debate on Wednesday, in practice, sovereignty has never been absolute. First of all, an internal dispute may very well constitute a threat to international peace and security and therefore warrant action by the Security Council under Chapter VII. That is why my Government thought it would have been appropriate, this past spring, to have a Security Council decision to halt the actions of President Milosevic in Kosovo, and we regret that that was not possible.

There may also be other instances when the United Nations needs to take action, including enforcement measures, to stop a humanitarian catastrophe. This will always require a case-by-case judgement, but the decisions should be taken within a framework on which we have all agreed. The challenge before us is to define that common ground, to find the basis on which we will be able to take action when human security is threatened, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter. The Commission on Global Governance a few years ago presented one interesting proposal on how intervention could be authorized in cases that constitute a violation of the security of people so gross and so extreme that it requires an international response.

Whatever result we achieve in this process, one key fact must be borne in mind — the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. We are all aware of the recent examples of how the Council has been paralysed and then by-passed by individual States or groups of States taking action instead. I would therefore like to conclude with a word of support for the ongoing efforts

to restore the authority of the Security Council and to strengthen its legitimacy. My Government believes that an enlarged Security Council, that better reflects the realities of today's world, would also better serve the interests and the security of all peoples. The time has come for turning this widely shared belief into concrete action.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) *(spoke in French):* May I begin by expressing my gratitude to the Secretary-General for the quality of his report on the work of the Organization, a report which is both concise and complete. Once again, as he has always done, the Secretary-General has sketched out for us an unvarnished picture of the situation of a world seeking peace, development and international cooperation but increasingly prey to new threats spawned by various conflicts. In the report, the Secretary-General takes up in a most timely manner the vision of the Organization and reviews the challenges and what is at stake in a world dominated by globalization.

We are on the threshold of a new millennium. More than ever before we need to guide our efforts for the advent of an era of peace and stability and act together to create a climate conducive to understanding among nations and peoples.

It is in this context that my delegation supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to submit a special report to the Millennium Assembly which will contain a set of realistic recommendations which will allow our Organization to carry out its mission of human solidarity for the coming years.

In speaking of the solidarity of mankind, the Secretary-General devoted particular attention to the humanitarian challenge to emphasize in a highly relevant fashion the need to finalize prevention strategies to allow us to act more effectively before emergency situations arise. We need to increasingly hone our ability to prevent crises and tragedies and to renounce our tendency to wait and then respond to tragic situations, in fact catastrophic ones.

Faced with certain humanitarian emergency situations and natural disasters, it is then up to all of us to care for the needs of the victims of these wars and disasters by acting diligently, effectively and without discrimination. What is at stake here is the credibility of the system and also the solidarity of the international community.

May I here appeal that we all transcend this difficult and sensitive debate on the right of interference, a source of division within our Assembly because of the dilemma it raises between the urgency of reacting quickly and effectively in cases of conflict or of mass violations of human rights and another prerogative of all States, the right to protect their national sovereignty.

We have the understanding and the capability to benefit from this debate by establishing among us a genuine culture of communication which must be based on an exchange of views in a climate of real confidence. Ultimately, we must give thought together, we must act together to define the appropriate criteria which will allow us tomorrow to respond collectively and effectively to humanitarian emergency situations.

We need also to work together to strengthen the role of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Security Council, by making the functioning of the Council more credible, more representative and more democratic. Indeed, only the United Nations can define and advance a universalist agenda, one which can make it possible to overcome the current problems and divergences.

Regarding the maintenance of peace, my country, Senegal, would like once again to reaffirm its faith in the important role played by the United Nations in this area and to reiterate its firm commitment to providing its support, insofar as possible, to the proper conduct of peacekeeping operations throughout the world.

We share the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General on the importance and the priority which should be given to preventive diplomacy through the use of the whole arsenal of political and diplomatic instruments and the peaceful means available to the international community.

We should like to recall here the oft-repeated wish of the States of Africa, a continent that pays a heavy price because of conflict situations, to receive increased assistance for the Organization of African Unity Peace Fund, aimed at strengthening African capacities in conflict management and settlement.

We would also like here to thank the Governments of France, the United States and the United Kingdom for the assistance they are rendering to African countries to enable them to intervene quickly and effectively in peacekeeping and emergency humanitarian assistance operations.

Finally, we believe that strengthened interaction between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly in Africa, can contribute to reducing the risk of the outbreak of conflicts. It is in this spirit that my delegation subscribes to the proposals of the Secretary-General regarding the need to pursue the strengthening of the concept of post-conflict peace-building to ensure the recovery of societies and States destroyed by wars. Within the framework of the chapter on peace-building, my delegation would also like to stress the need to integrate the concept of the culture of peace into any approach to post-conflict national reconstruction.

The Secretary-General devoted a significant part of his report to the elimination of poverty, which has become a priority objective for the institutions of the United Nations system. In this connection, we welcome the efforts made to assist developing countries to achieve the objectives of sustainable development. We therefore need to redouble our efforts, especially in order to stimulate investments and growth to deal with debt-related issues and the marginalization of developing countries in an economy driven by the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization, despite its potential opportunities, for the most part has until now only shown us a vista of unfulfilled promises and not very credible prospects for growth and development in the countries of the third world. This is therefore a bold challenge that we must meet if we wish to build a new world order that is more just and equitable and to contribute to eliminating the causes of conflict and instability throughout the world.

In conclusion, I would like once again to highlight the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in the political, economic and social life of our contemporary society. May the deliberations on the report of the Secretary-General allow us to benefit from lessons and experiences on all sides, and may it assist us in spelling out the stakes and priorities for the next century in the maintenance of peace, economic and social progress and the advancement of human rights.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I wish to thank and commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization. We also commend him for raising an important, topical but sensitive issue for our consideration — namely, the issue of humanitarian intervention — which must be squarely addressed by the Member States.

The central theme of the Secretary-General's report — facing the humanitarian challenge — is particularly relevant in the context of our times, which are characterized by many natural and man-made disasters and tragedies in many parts of the world. In the wake of these crises, there is a strongly felt need for the United Nations to concentrate on response-preparedness, capacity-building and bridging the gap between emergency relief and early recovery. Clearly, building a culture of prevention is much more beneficial, long-lasting and less costly than reacting to disasters only after they have struck.

In responding to these crises situations, there is a need for increased and effective cooperation and coordination among the various United Nations and other international agencies, which should continue to receive our strong support in all aspects of their work. At the same time, in responding to these humanitarian challenges it is important that there should be equality and non-selectivity of treatment. Those affected, whether in Africa or elsewhere, should receive humanitarian assistance in a timely and impartial manner.

The Secretary-General raised the pertinent question of humanitarian intervention in the wake of the inaction of the Organization with regard to the genocidal war in Rwanda and its horrific consequences, and the forced intervention in Kosovo, which saved thousands of lives and reversed the heinous policy of ethnic cleansing there, but which was carried out outside the ambit of the Security Council. It is right for the Secretary-General to raise the issue, for, clearly, the international community cannot sit idly by in the face of such massive humanitarian tragedies. Our innate sense of morality, sharpened by the spin-offs of the technological age — such as the electronic media, which has made the world a veritable global village — prompts us to act. Indeed, the issue is particularly pertinent in the context of our attempt to define, or redefine, the role of the United Nations in the new century and the new millennium.

At the core of the issue raised by the Secretary-General is the effectiveness of the Organization in responding to crisis situations, including grave humanitarian tragedies unfolding before our very eyes, or whether it should respond at all. But as he himself has pointed out, there are many other types of responses that may be just as effective as, if not more effective than, forceful intervention — which, if at all contemplated, must clearly be a measure of last resort. In addressing the issue, the Secretary-General interpreted the Charter in a creative way, on the argument that the Charter is a living document whose high principles are as relevant now as they were before. He is, of course, right. But it

is equally true that much of the problem lies embedded in that same Charter — namely, the decision-making processes of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council, which must find a way of circumscribing the frequently impasse-creating and consensus-blocking effect of the veto, which clearly was at the heart of the paralysis of the Organization in connection with Rwanda, Kosovo and many other situations.

The dilemma posed by the Secretary-General in respect of the humanitarian intervention issue should spur us to find an early consensus on the reform of the Security Council, a process that has gone on for six years too long. Until and unless that reform takes place, the United Nations will hobble along into the new century — 83 days away from where we stand now — carrying with it the undiscarded baggage of the last century.

The Secretary-General has also posed a number of other related questions that are germane to the discussion of the subject of humanitarian intervention, but he clearly left them to be further discussed and deliberated, as they must be, by Member States, as it should be, which must forge a consensus on what is clearly an extremely complex subject involving sensitive issues of State sovereignty, which has long been held as sacrosanct, and individual sovereignty, which is assuming increasing currency but which forms an important and integral, though perhaps implicit, part of the United Nations Charter. However, whatever the merits of the argument in support of humanitarian intervention, we should not lose sight of the necessity of securing the authorization of the Security Council for any use of force against States. At the same time, the principle of intervention, if approved, should be applicable across the board — that is, for both developing and developed countries — on the principle that what is good for the goose should also be good for the gander.

While the reactions have been swift and strong on both sides of the divide, there are no easy answers. The compelling arguments marshalled in support of each point of view appear sound and persuasive and cannot be simply dismissed. Clearly, this is not an issue that can be settled in the lifetime of this session of the General Assembly; nor, perhaps, in the space of a few future sessions of the Assembly. It is one that requires serious and in-depth deliberations in an appropriate manner, such as that proposed by the delegation of Egypt. Such a thorough discussion is imperative, as the issue affects in a fundamental way all Members of the Organization. Member States have benefited from the preliminary reactions of those who have addressed this issue. We are convinced that many others will wish to pronounce themselves on the subject at the appropriate time and forum.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Peacekeeping continues to be a very dynamic and demanding task. Two major missions ended recently, but two new ones have been established, with prospects of additional operations being launched in the near future. While there has been close cooperation and collaboration between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, these regional efforts should neither supplant the role of United Nations peacekeeping nor absolve the United Nations, specifically the Security Council, from fulfilling its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Peacekeeping can no longer be viewed as a distinct and isolated event. It should be treated instead as an important element of a continuous response to increasingly complex contemporary conflicts, ranging from preventive diplomacy to post-conflict peace-building. The scope of peacekeeping has increasingly become multidisciplinary in nature. We believe that a multidisciplinary approach will address not only the symptoms of the conflicts but, more importantly, their underlying causes, which are often socio-economic in nature.

Comprehensive sanctions remain a powerful instrument for the coercion of States, which unfortunately often result in dire consequences for the ordinary people. For instance, a grave humanitarian situation exists in Iraq following seven years of the most punitive sanctions ever imposed on a people. The international community and the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, have the heavy responsibility of alleviating the sufferings of the Iraqi people, even while grappling with the important issue of peace and security in that region as well as with the other important but unresolved issues of the Gulf war. Sanctions should be resorted to with extreme care and only when absolutely necessary, when all other peaceful measures provided for in the Charter have been applied. They should have specific objectives, be clearly targeted and have specified time-frames, and they should be completely and formally lifted as soon as they are no longer necessary, as should have been done in the case of Libya.

My delegation fully concurs with the Secretary-General that the United Nations disarmament machinery has not been fully utilized during the year. Indeed, the new millennium does not look promising on the disarmament front. We will, regrettably, bequeath to our grandchildren a future burdened with the most awesome weapons of mass destruction created by man: nuclear weapons. A number of recent events may well presage a resumption of the nuclear arms race.

Three years after the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, there has not been any movement to pursue in good faith and conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. With the exception of China, the nuclear-weapon States continue to block serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament leading to the final elimination of all nuclear weapons. There are now new players in the deadly game of nuclear armament, with all of its implications for regional and global security.

The Conference on Disarmament continues to be stymied by fundamental differences among its members. The Conference continues to shy away from constituting a working group on nuclear disarmament. Consensus seems to be as elusive as ever. My delegation, among others, had called for the automatic renewal of the Conference's programme of work without its having to seek a fresh mandate each year. Unless this working method is changed, much of the work of the Conference will be stalled.

Another regrettable development in the area of disarmament was the failure to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). The conference would have generated an impetus and set important future directions and goals for disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament.

There is increasing cooperation and collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations in the prevention of conflict and in peacekeeping. This is particularly true in Africa. This is a welcome development and ought to be encouraged. However, while regional organizations, as they should, have a role in this area, this does not absolve the Council from its central and primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security. In sharing the burdens of peacekeeping with regional organizations, the Council should not subcontract or lease out its Charter-mandated responsibility.

There is probably no single tool of conflict so widespread, so easily available and so difficult to restrict as small arms. Noting that the easy availability of small arms has in many cases contributed to violence and political instability in many countries, the Secretary-General has observed that the worldwide spread of such weapons has damaged development prospects and imperiled human security in every way. This is recognized by the Security Council, which recently discussed the issue of small arms, resulting in the issuance of an important and comprehensive presidential statement. The convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade — which, we hope, will be chaired by a developing country, given the fact that the problem largely affects the developing world — will be a major contribution in addressing this issue.

My delegation condemns in the strongest terms the increasing acts of violence against civilians. Clearly, States have the primary responsibility in prosecuting the perpetrators through their national justice system, or, whenever and wherever appropriate, through the relevant international criminal tribunals. Until a global enforcement mechanism is in place to address these crimes, ad hoc tribunals may be required whenever necessary. The two existing International Criminal Tribunals should be strongly supported by the international community.

We strongly condemn attacks on United Nations personnel in the field. The Organization has an obligation to ensure that they are able to safely carry out their mission in responding to the needs of civilians in armed conflict, who should have unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance. We think it would be fitting for the United Nations to pay tribute to the courage and sacrifices of these humanitarian workers in the same way that it honours its uniformed peacekeepers.

My delegation is gratified that the Secretary-General gives the issue of globalization the attention it deserves. We agree with the concern that he expressed when he stated that:

> "Two years of crisis-induced international financial turbulence have nonetheless reduced global economic growth substantially." *(A/54/1, para. 221)*

Indeed, some economies have experienced not just a slowdown but, tragically, even a reversal in hard-earned economic growth and a setback in social progress. We entirely agree with the Secretary-General that

> "the world remains vulnerable to similar disruptions in the future, underlining the need for action to prevent such a possibility." *(ibid.)*

This is precisely the message my own Prime Minister has been repeating these past two years since the onset of the East Asian financial crisis.

My delegation is encouraged by the continued engagement of the General Assembly with globalization issues, as exemplified by the convening last September of the two-day high-level dialogue on the theme of the social and economic impact of globalization. Similarly, the internal debates within the Economic and Social Council, as well as the two high-level dialogues related to globalization that it held with the Bretton Woods institutions last year and early this year, are also encouraging. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done in terms of follow-up to those dialogues to ensure that the concerns raised in the United Nations, which is a unique intergovernmental body, receive the due attention from the Bretton Woods institutions.

My delegation is also pleased that this year there is an added dimension in our examination of globalization, namely, the linkage between globalization and security. We agree with the Secretary-General's view that global market forces can generate wealth and prosperity, but that where development is uneven the result can be increased political tensions and the risk of instability. In the current context, it is important for all of us to be alert to this dimension while acknowledging the vast opportunities offered by globalization.

There are new dimensions of globalization which have yet to be fully understood. These new dimensions can only be addressed multilaterally, by the United Nations and by other international institutions. The task ahead is not to reverse globalization but to understand it better so that we can respond more efficiently and effectively. My delegation appreciates the fact that the Secretary-General is sensitive to the various dimensions of globalization. We look forward to working with him, the Secretariat and other Member States to ensure that the Organization can play a positive, constructive and meaningful role in the process.

Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman): At the outset, I should like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report contained in document A/54/1. It is indeed an important document that deserves the attention of this Assembly. What makes this year's report deserve special consideration is the fact that it comes at a time when the Organization and the world at large are preparing to enter the next millennium. The report should give Member States the opportunity to evaluate the past and reorient themselves for the future.

Oman fully agrees with the Secretary-General's view, expressed in paragraph 36 of his report, that "there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition" for this Organization than preventing armed conflicts. It was established for that purpose, and it should aim to achieve the objective of sparing succeeding generations the scourge of war. This is the greatest challenge facing the United Nations.

Preventive diplomacy is a precious tool, and, if utilized properly, it can save lives and spare costs. We have seen this type of quiet diplomacy defuse tensions and prevent wars. This is a time when sanctions have become the means by which the international community intervenes, but as these collective measures are losing focus and failing to achieve their desired goals, we believe that the time has come for this Organization to reconsider its methods of operation.

As the Secretary-General rightly noted, coercive measures can hardly be labelled long-term strategies. Moreover, they tend more towards doing harm than towards restoring international peace and security on a long-term basis. For that reason, we fully endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation on the need to improve the design and implementation of sanctions mandated by the Security Council in order to restore the credibility of the international regime.

Conflicts do not occur spontaneously and without warning. Rather, they are the culmination of years of tension, mistrust and friction between parties. In this regard, preventive diplomacy, whether it takes the form of mediation, conciliation or negotiation, is greatly needed to address the root causes of conflicts. Long-term prevention should embrace a wide-ranging early warning system, which could be established by forging a greater partnership with regional organizations.

In an increasingly interdependent world, development remains a challenge for many of the developing countries. This challenge can be met only through well-planned, coordinated and adequately funded international action. Through the collective efforts of the United Nations and other financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the international community can help the developing

countries overcome this challenge. Based on our conviction of the benefits of such interdependence, my country looks forward to joining the World Trade Organization soon. It hopes to participate in that organization as a full member and play its role effectively by upholding the fundamental principles of free trade and the development of mutual cooperation with all nations.

The financial crisis of this Organization remains one of the challenges that deserve our attention, too. Oman has maintained a clean record of promptly paying its dues to the United Nations. However, we cannot fail to call on other Members to pay their dues promptly, in full and without conditions in order to allow this Organization to implement its programmes and carry out the mandate expected of it in the most diligent manner. We also call on the Secretary-General to continue the process of restructuring the various United Nations bodies. We hope this restructuring will be extended to the Security Council in a manner that will enhance its role and reflect the cultural and political diversity of the contemporary world, as well as consolidate the role of emerging forces which have come to play an increasingly important role in international affairs.

The unanimous decision to hold the Millennium Summit in conjunction with the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly will provide the international community with a genuine opportunity to issue a declaration which may be considered a plan of action, laying down a redefined approach for economic and social development for all people. We believe time and effort should be accorded to the planning of this historic event, and we reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's introduction of proposals and ideas aimed at improving the Organization and its functions. We also believe that dialogue among civilizations should constitute the basis for such an approach, thus marking a new beginning at the start of a new millennium in order to reach the objectives that this Organization desires and stands for in the years to come.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like first of all to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General for the consistently remarkable way in which he has been guiding the work of our Organization, and to convey our thanks for his concise and complete report on the work of the Organization. As this is the last session before the Millennium Assembly, it deserves particular attention and calls for very attentive and sustained study on our part.

As my delegation will have the opportunity to express its position and its concerns when we study the various items on the agenda here and in the major Committees, I will limit myself simply to commenting on a few of the matters addressed by the Secretary-General.

First of all, the Secretary-General's observations are clear-minded and frank: in paragraph 7, he reminds us that "In terms of violent conflicts, the most worrying development in 1998 was a significant increase in the number of wars". He also notes that peace remains precarious in many regions and, in the economic sphere, that poverty has continued to increase. Those simple observations provide a measure of the magnitude of the serious challenges facing us as nations.

Yet the United Nations is fully and sometimes successfully involved in many situations, through peacekeeping operations, good-offices and mediation missions and development programmes. The most recent example is the organization of the referendum on self-determination in East Timor, despite the unfortunate events that followed that consultation. In other cases, regrettably, there have been obvious failures, because of a lack of political will, or because of delays in putting the measures in place, or because the United Nations was quite simply unable to deal with the situation. And sometimes, the United Nations is inclined to apply a single solution to a number of situations, even though it is obvious that every situation is unique and that each one requires a specific solution.

In that connection, as the organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council — the reform and expansion of which remain necessary — must play its role and demonstrate the same determination and firmness with regard to all situations before it, irrespective of where they occur; but at the same time, the General Assembly, as a principal organ of the United Nations and as the forum in which the sovereign will of States takes shape, must assume to the full its role under the Charter. It should do this, for example, by taking initiatives in the area of post-conflict peace-building. It is important to affirm forcefully and unambiguously that in all cases — whether they relate to preventive diplomacy, to peacekeeping or to the provision of humanitarian assistance — the consent of States is crucial, as the then Secretary-General pertinently recalled in his report, "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277).

Here, let me note that in paragraph 66 of the report before the Assembly today the Secretary-General acknowledges that

> "enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations. Only the Charter provides a universally accepted legal basis for the use of force".

This is without doubt a perceptive and highly factual observation which under all circumstances should guide our actions and those of the international community in order to prevent any divergence from international law, which is obligatory for Member States — for all Member States.

The promotion of international law is everyone's business; we must all participate in the codification of international law. Indeed, it is unacceptable that legal norms should be created without our involvement and without our having participated in their formulation. In that connection, although my delegation considers it important that the International Criminal Court (ICC) — whose establishment we hail — should play a role in deterrence and prevention, we would warn against an excessively broad interpretation of the Statute of the Court. The ICC should not replace national courts, which remain solely competent to try criminals and tyrants; nor should it become a tool of Power rivalries. The credibility, and hence the success, of the Court requires full respect for the sovereignty and national legislation of States and for the norms and principles of international law. International law must not be held hostage to politics or political scheming, or be at the exclusive service of Powers that invoke it when it serves their interests and ignore it when it does not. Nor is it to be tolerated that sovereign States should be the targets of unilateral coercive measures in flagrant violation of the norms of international law and of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Similarly, the sensitive issue of Security Council sanctions is of enormous concern to us. We regret that the Council remains unable to undertake an objective reassessment of sanctions regimes and has not decided on the permanent lifting of such sanctions when the countries in question have met their obligations. In all situations, the Council should aim to minimize or eliminate the effects of sanctions on populations, through, as the Secretary-General himself proposes in paragraph 124 of his report, "'smart sanctions'. . or by incorporating appropriate and carefully thought through humanitarian exceptions directly in Security Council resolutions". In that spirit, my country calls for the lifting of the unjust sanctions imposed on Iraq and on Libya, countries which have fully cooperated with the Organization.

If today there is one shared concern that goes to the very heart of the mandate of the United Nations, it is one that underlies our solemn undertaking to protect and promote respect for human dignity everywhere and under all circumstances: ultimately, the human being must be the beneficiary of the progress achieved by human civilization. Indeed, thanks to the rapid appearance on the stage of history of formerly colonized nations, and to the phenomenon of globalization — which overcomes distinctions, diminishes differences and eliminates boundaries — the culture of human rights, which is inherently an evolving culture, is now spreading its influence to the farthest corners of the world.

But our universal civilization does not seem to be affronted by the enormous physical and emotional distress of the billion individuals who live on less than a dollar a day, of the billion individuals who do not know how to read or write and who have no access to basic health care, or of the one quarter of children in the South who will never go to school. In our view, the only worthwhile approach to this problem encompasses human rights in a comprehensive, integrated and indivisible way: all human rights, which is to say the basic economic, cultural and social needs of every individual, along with civil and political rights.

Today we hear a call to establish the right, or the duty, of humanitarian intervention as a norm of international law. However well intentioned it may be, this proposal raises many questions and concerns because of its vagueness and because of its inherent risk of serious abuse. In his capacity as current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), President Abdelaziz Bouteflika stressed these issues in his address to the General Assembly on 20 September 1999.

First of all, what about State sovereignty, which is the very underpinning of the international community? What about respect for the independence and territorial integrity of States, as enshrined in the Charter? What about respect for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, which is one of the sustaining pillars of international relations? Who is to decide that there is an urgent need to intervene in a given State, according to what criteria, in what framework, and on the basis of what conditions? Is the right of intervention the province of all States, or only of the most powerful

among them? Do small States also have the right to intervene and the prospect of intervening in the affairs of larger States?

How and where do we draw the line between a humanitarian intervention and an intervention for political or strategic reasons, and when do political considerations prevail over humanitarian conditions?

What, finally, is the position of the international community with respect to the immense suffering of hundreds of millions of individuals condemned to illiteracy, poverty, disease and underdevelopment in dozens of countries of the South which are largely victims of an unfair economic system? Are those individuals also subject to the right to intervene, or should this be limited to violations of civil and political rights?

These questions all bring us back to the need for a serious, comprehensive and calm examination of this matter and its many political and legal implications, removed from any political or propaganda calculation and without polemics, on the basis of respect for the sovereign equality of States and the standards of international law, as well as the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Foreign Ministers of the non-aligned countries, as well as those of the Group of 77 and China, have given their reply. At a meeting held on the fringes of the work of this Assembly, they rejected the right of humanitarian interference, since it has no legal basis, either in the United Nations Charter or in the general principles of international law.

In his report the Secretary-General devotes several paragraphs to Africa, thus bearing witness to the particular interest of our Organization in my continent, which is faced with numerous and complex challenges, as the debate of 29 and 30 September in the Security Council strikingly illustrated.

As current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President Bouteflika had occasion to reassert before the Assembly Africa's determination to stand up for itself, assume its role and take its place in the concert of nations. I therefore simply recall that Africa has never been in a better position than it is today to rely on the support of the international community and to fully benefit from it. Africa expects the resolute support of the international community in its recovery efforts.

The role of the United Nations and of this Assembly is crucial in this regard. That is why, as representative of the current Chairman of the OAU, I sent on 4 October a letter to the President of the General Assembly asking him to set up the working group that the General Assembly decided to create by resolution 53/92, adopted on 7 December 1998. We are convinced that it will be extremely useful for implementing the recommendations of the Secretary-General on Africa and for the promotion of peace, security and development on the continent.

I would like to conclude by offering a few brief ideas on a topic which has become very fashionable, that of globalization.

Presented as a bearer of universal prosperity and possessing all the virtues, globalization, a phenomenon both irreversible and irresistible, raises many questions today because of its dysfunctional aspects and its threat to marginalize the poorest and most vulnerable. Indeed, unless we are careful — as the Asian crisis and its effects amply demonstrated — instead of being a factor for integration, globalization could become a factor of exclusion in a world where already many nations live at the edge of civilization and progress.

Faced with this situation, we must together restore to globalization its initial purpose by introducing agreed formulas for regulation, coordination and control.

Those are the ideas that I wanted to share with the Assembly on the phenomenon of globalization and on other important matters that we give the Secretary-General credit for raising, enabling us to have an interesting as well as, we hope, a productive debate.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): I join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his analytical report on the work of the Organization, which emphasizes a comprehensive approach to the current situation on international peace and security and economic and social development. I am convinced that the Secretary-General's report and other reports elaborated by the Secretariat will greatly help the work of delegations during the present session.

As the report makes clear and as we increasingly see for ourselves, the humanitarian challenge is a consequence, *inter alia*, of the internal and inter-State conflicts and natural disasters that have disturbed the international community this year.

Our delegation shares the Secretary General's view on the main causes of today's internal conflicts. From our perspective, his statement in paragraphs 17 and 18 needs to be particularly emphasized. Indeed, countries that are afflicted by war suffer from economic decline. At the same time, the existing inequality between domestic and social groups, rather than poverty, generates tensions and conflicts in society. In some instances the impact of radical market-oriented economic reforms and structural adjustment programmes imposed without compensating social policies can undermine political stability and lead to conflictual situations. That is why the assistance provided by international financial institutions is so important for countries with economies in transition. Otherwise, the high social cost of reforms could undermine the democratization process in most of the newly independent States.

In our view, the United Nations should also pay special attention to and be more energetically involved in, resolving so-called frozen conflicts caused by aggressive separatist movements supported from outside. Unfortunately, this issue is not sufficiently reflected in the report.

The Secretary-General emphasizes in his report that peacekeeping operations remain a key instrument to resolve conflicts and crisis situations after all means of preventive diplomacy have been exhausted. In this regard, we should mention that the past year has indeed been a tumultuous one for United Nations peacekeeping. The United Nations is facing new challenges with the creation of the large-scale, multidimensional and unprecedented operations in Kosovo and now in East Timor. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to coordinate these and other peacekeeping activities more efficiently.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Republic of Moldova is convinced that the best strategy for maintaining international peace and security is to address the root causes of conflicts. In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to place increased emphasis on preventive diplomacy, in particular by further improving the United Nations early-warning system. The need, advocated by the Secretary-General, to make a transition from a "culture of reaction" to a "culture of prevention" is worthy of our full recognition and support.

The conflicts in Kosovo and Rwanda have sharply raised for the international community the question of the relationship between the concepts of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, on the one hand, and the imperative need to observe human rights, on the other hand. As we have seen, disagreements within the Security Council have impeded its discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in this area. This fact has justly drawn criticism from many international actors. At the same time, we share the Secretary General's assessment that

> "enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations." *(A/54/1, para. 66)*

Therefore, our delegation, like others, encourages and supports further discussions on how the necessity for humanitarian intervention can be brought into conformity with the United Nations main objective of maintaining international peace and security. This issue appears to be one of the main challenges of the United Nations at the threshold of the next millennium.

A dominant theme in the recently concluded general debate was globalization. We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to adapt our Organization to a globalized society. Drawing the attention of the international community to the transnationalization of "uncivil" elements, along with the emergence of a global civil society, the Secretary-General indicated that this is an area that needs our concerted action. In this respect, we note that the report records the first positive results achieved by the United Nations in dealing with problems raised by globalization.

I would like to underline in this connection that it is imperative that the countries with economies in transition should also benefit, along with the developing countries, from additional official development assistance and debt relief. We think that enabling newly independent countries with economies in transition to be effectively integrated into the globalized world economy is in everyone's interest.

Our delegation fully shares the Secretary-General's emphasis on strengthening the international legal order. The report stresses three main aspects: the human rights regime, the activity of ad hoc international tribunals, and the recent establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court. In this context, I would like to inform the Assembly that the Republic of Moldova intends to ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court in

the first half of the next year, thus contributing to the early entry into force of this document.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the Republic of Moldova strongly supports the United Nations process of modernization. My Government highly appreciates the important work performed by the United Nations during the last year.

We hope that next year's Millennium Assembly will provide an opportunity to identify the challenges awaiting the international community and to strengthen the global leadership of the United Nations for the next century. A reformed and strengthened United Nations will undoubtedly play a crucial role in the fulfilment of the tasks that lie ahead.

Mr. Kanju (Pakistan): In his address to the General Assembly, as well as his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General has argued in favour of building a global culture of conflict prevention and has issued a call for strategies to avert or meet natural disasters or emergencies. This is a most laudable objective. He has proposed international preventive action under United Nations authority to meet the two challenges.

Any study of wars and conflicts clearly shows that, unfortunately, massive and systematic violations of human rights occur in conflict situations. These violations are used as a weapon of war in brutal campaigns to secure the submission of the targeted people. This has held true in the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Rwanda, Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere.

The Secretary-General has advocated international preventive action in all humanitarian emergencies as a consequence of wars or conflicts, without making any distinction on the basis of geographical, political or other considerations. The principal proposition that has been put forward is that

> "massive and systematic violations of human rights — wherever they take place — should not be allowed to stand." (*A/54/PV.4*)

Pakistan believes that the concept of humanitarian intervention requires careful examination and analysis, in view of its enormous implications for all Member States. We must be clear and certain about the purpose, scope and legitimacy of such an enterprise. It is our view that serious thought needs to be given to the Secretary-General's proposal which in some instances may well contain inner contradictions. Until such time as a thorough discussion of various postulations made by the Secretary-General can be undertaken, at the national level as well as at the level of the international community, the merit or otherwise of implementing these proposals cannot be decided. Pakistan will study them with the utmost care, which they deserve, and will provide its detailed views on them in due course. There are, however, certain fundamental parameters within which these proposals have to be viewed.

First, the principle of State sovereignty and non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States must be respected. However, this principle cannot be extended to situations in which people under colonial rule, foreign occupation or alien domination are struggling for their inalienable rights to self-determination.

Second, the central role of the General Assembly, as the only body with universal representation in the United Nations, must be maintained and in fact strengthened. There should also be no encroachment by the Security Council on the role of other United Nations bodies. The Security Council must operate strictly within its mandate in discussing issues of peace and security.

Third, a clear distinction must be maintained between humanitarian crises as a result of wars, conflicts or disputes which by their very nature constitute threats to international peace and security and other human rights issues. The latter clearly fall within the purview of the United Nations human rights system and lie outside the competence of the Security Council.

Fourth, for humanitarian interventions to find general acceptance they must have legitimacy under international law. They must fully conform to the provisions of the United Nations Charter and be undertaken only with the explicit authority of the Security Council, after a clear breach of, or threat to, international peace and security has been established.

Five, international humanitarian interventions as a preventive measure can be credible only if they are applied to all situations. There must be no selectivity, nor must they be media-driven. They must be based on the principle of equal justice for all. Otherwise, such interventions will erode the confidence of the international community in the United Nations.

Six, the underlying causes, not merely the symptoms of conflicts and disputes, must be addressed in order to find lasting solutions to conflicts. These could range from the free exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination to the removal of social and economic inequities.

Seven, in keeping with his own reasoning, the Secretary-General should play a more active role, in conformity with the responsibilities entrusted to him by the Charter, in situations where massive violations of human rights occur against people under colonial rule or foreign occupation.

We fully agree with and support the Secretary-General's call for the creation of an effective early-warning system for disaster prevention, as well as adequate international emergency-response capabilities. While such measures seek to address the immediate consequences of natural disasters, it is imperative to evolve strategies aimed at equitable and sustainable development in order to meet the diverse goals of international peace and security.

Peace and development are indivisible. This is even more true against the backdrop of the process of globalization. A complex and multidimensional phenomenon, globalization is shaping the contours of international relations, particularly in the economic and social arena. The developed countries have been extolling the benefits and blessings of globalization. The developing countries have seen nothing but the globalization of misery. This became evidently clear when the hard-won growth and prosperity of the East Asian countries fell victim to the forces of globalization. Globalization has thus increased the vulnerability of the developing countries to external factors, leaving them at the mercy of a few rich individuals, mega-corporations and undemocratic financial institutions.

The members of the international community, particularly the developed countries, cannot absolve themselves of the responsibility to mitigate the sufferings of the peoples in the developing countries caused by this process. We must take immediate action to check the forces being unleashed by globalization, which have played havoc with the economic and social development of the developing countries. The Secretary-General has recognized that the responsibility of addressing its negative consequences primarily rests with the world's most advanced economies. We agree with him and call upon them to take urgent action in this regard.

While the Secretary-General's report also mentions the impact of globalization on environment, it does not address this issue in any detail. Environmental issues, no doubt, require global action. We believe that, in accordance with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities, all countries should play their due role in promoting the sustained development of developing countries. The United Nations has a central role to play in ensuring that the process of globalization is based on equity, justice and the inclusion of all members of the international community.

Since 1997, the Secretary-General has undertaken major reforms of funds and programmes relating to the United Nations operational activities for development. Unfortunately, these reforms have not resulted in any of the increase in funding that was promised by the traditional donor countries at the time of the adoption of these reforms. In fact, the resources at the disposal of such funds have been constantly dwindling.

To compensate for the depleted resources, the Secretary-General is exploring private-sector partnerships. We would like to stress, in this context, that such resources can only complement the resources provided by donor countries and cannot become a substitute, nor should such resources distort in any manner the priorities of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

The Secretary-General has informed the General Assembly about the increased cooperation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the international financial institutions and the specialized agencies on integrating human rights norms into the development process. Such integration is the prerogative of Governments and should be undertaken through an intergovernmental process. There have been repeated efforts to make human rights a cross-cutting issue, particularly in the development arena. We believe, instead, that development should be a cross-cutting issue for the international community. In our view, the best way to promote adherence to universally agreed human rights norms is through the implementation of the right to development and through poverty eradication.

While the United Nations is launching initiatives to meet the goal of halving absolute poverty by 2015, the negative consequences of globalization have increased the numbers of people living below the poverty line. We must address the root causes of poverty and undertake

long-term strategies by creating an enabling international economic environment to pursue the goal of poverty eradication.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive, thought-provoking and challenging report, which is bound to lead to serious discussions and debate in the months ahead.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): At the outset, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his excellent and thought-provoking report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization.

Among its many important messages, the report highlights the ever stronger interrelationship between the various activities of the United Nations and its agencies. Humanitarian action cannot be seen in isolation from efforts at conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Economic development includes issues such as debt relief, external assistance, good governance and human rights. This interdependence represents a challenge both to national Governments and to the United Nations system. We must ensure that the activities of different bodies are coordinated in order to achieve our objectives of peace and development.

The Secretary-General draws particular attention to the disturbing increase in natural disasters in recent years. It is crucial to learn more about the causes and the consequences of natural disasters, both from a humanitarian and from an environmental perspective. Within the United Nations, there are a large number of bodies dealing with humanitarian emergencies, the environment, climate change and man-made disasters. Improved coordination of their efforts can contribute to a better understanding of the problems and the solutions.

As regards conflict resolution and peace-building, the Secretary-General points out that the international community has a tendency to ignore some protracted conflicts and to concentrate insufficiently on preventive action and early warning. I believe there is a broad consensus that this is a fundamental problem. It is obviously much less costly — both in financial and in human terms — to prevent than to repair, and nothing is more costly than doing neither. What the Secretary-General describes as forgotten conflicts can no longer remain forgotten.

I would like to recall the establishment of the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, to which several Governments, including my own, have made voluntary contributions. It is my understanding that the Fund has been a useful mechanism for the Secretary-General in a number of preventive diplomatic efforts. We shall continue to support the Fund and urge as many Governments as possible to do the same. At the same time, I would like to reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's plea to the Fifth Committee some days ago. It is now high time that we all make the efforts needed to provide sufficient regular budget funding for the conflict-prevention efforts of the United Nations.

The conflicts in Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone have caused immeasurable suffering for hundreds of thousands of people and placed new burdens upon the response system of the United Nations. I am happy to note that the United Nations is intensely involved in the efforts to find solutions to these conflicts, in close cooperation with regional organizations.

The diplomatic and peace-building activities of the United Nations with regard to the conflict in East Timor are but the latest example of the importance of collective action by the international community to ensure international peace and security, through the effective engagement of the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

On a matter of particular interest to Norway, I would like to join the Secretary-General in expressing optimism regarding mine clearance, assistance to mine victims and implementation of the Ottawa Convention. The challenges in this field are enormous, yet the international community has made progress. Additional ratification of the Convention would be most welcome.

My Government welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General in his report deals extensively with the situation in Africa. Despite many signs of significant progress, more than half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa still lives in absolute poverty. The AIDS pandemic is a taking a heavy toll. Promising conflict-resolution efforts and democratization processes in many African countries notwithstanding, we have not succeeded to the extent we had hoped.

As outlined by the Secretary-General, the United Nations is involved in a large number of development programmes, humanitarian efforts and conflict resolution activities in Africa. Progress is, however, dependent on resources that in too many cases are scarce. I agree with the Secretary-General that Africa's problems must remain

of the highest priority for the Organization Many conflicts on the continent are protracted and easily forgotten. They may not get the attention of the international media, but this must not guide the efforts of the United Nations and its Member States.

Important reforms of the Organization have been implemented. We highly appreciate the fact that the Secretary-General is dedicated to pursue the reform process further. In these efforts he can rely on our full support. It is commendable that a record high number of Member States have met their budget assessments for 1998 and all prior years. But major arrears remain to be paid in full. A determined reform process should go hand-in-hand with fulfilment of financial obligations. The Secretary-General envisages that none of the Organization's debt to Member States can be paid in 1999, and certainly not in full. This is a disturbing state of affairs which reduces the Organization's flexibility. It is in every Member State's interest that such a situation is not allowed to prevail.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Peruvian delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the report on the work of the Organization before us. It reflects the situation that the Organization is undergoing in its different spheres, as well as the challenges faced by the international community at the dawn of a new century.

The Secretary-General reminds us of the complex nature of the humanitarian task that we have to tackle now and during the next millennium, as well as how important it is for the member countries of the United Nations to contribute to collective security and the stability and predictability of the international system, thus ensuring the development of our societies.

Understanding the basic causes of natural disasters implies quantifying, *inter alia*, the changes experienced by the ozone layer, greenhouse gas emissions, the production of drinking water, the effects of deforestation, the use of new crops and the sustainability of high demographic levels in urban areas. Significant progress has been achieved in this regard, thanks to the sponsorship of Governments and of non-governmental entities and their contribution to specialized regional forums.

Alert calls have been sent out by many countries in different regions of the globe. The Central American and Caribbean countries are now facing a dramatic need to recalculate their forecasts for preventing future damage from Atlantic hurricanes. Similarly, countries on the west coast of South America must reallocate their resources to face in the coming years climate changes and their consequences: losses of crops and of sea food exports, as well as damage to existing public infrastructure. All of this will require an immediate response once the disaster or calamity has occurred, but a long-term estimate.

For the Peruvian Government, the matter of natural disasters is of high priority. Throughout its history our country has been severely affected by floods, droughts and earthquakes.

As may be recalled, the southern oscillation, the El Niño phenomenon, of 1982-1983, severely affected Peru, causing nearly $1 billion in losses and a drop in the gross domestic product of about 11 per cent. The effects of the 1998 El Niño, while severe in their intensity in Peru, were not as serious, due to the emphasis given to prevention by the civil defence system promoted by the Peruvian Executive. Its strategy for handling the intense rain and drought included three stages: prevention, emergency assistance while the phenomenon was occurring, and rehabilitation to repair the damage. Prevention consisted of measures to protect the lives and health of populations located in the most vulnerable areas, to protect production and the social and economic infrastructure and to avoid paralysis and interruption of basic public services, and for drainage of water and guarantee of public order.

Human and material losses were lower as a result of these measures. Production, nevertheless, shrank considerably. The gross domestic product barely grew by 0.3 per cent, due to uncontrollable effects in the fishing sector.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The resources for these preventive measures were essentially domestic, while others came from loans from the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. In this sense, we believe it important that the Secretary-General has emphasized the need for international assistance to prepare for natural disasters as well as the benefits of exchanging experiences. Peru has an abundance of experience in this area that it is willing to share with other countries.

As our delegation stated during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in July this year, it is extremely important that there be recognition of the need for a global approach to humanitarian crises.

This implies clear priorities, particularly in planning, and effective and efficient action by the agencies on the ground.

We acknowledge that, in spite of great efforts, the response is still insufficient. There is a worrying sectoral and geographical imbalance in humanitarian aid that must be corrected if we wish to reverse the present trend, which is endangering the long-term prospects of the effectiveness of humanitarian action.

While emphasizing the imperative need for the political will on the part of States to facilitate the access of needy populations to assistance and cooperation, it seems to us equally valuable that the Secretary-General has included, as the first point in his annual report, a reference to the importance of developing a culture of prevention to deal with natural disasters.

Traditionally, our region considers that conflicts must be avoided, and that if they nevertheless occur a peaceful solution must be sought. All possible means of dialogue and negotiation should be exhausted for this purpose. As indicated in the United Nations Charter, force may be used only within the scope of Article 51, since resorting to it, even when, for the noblest of causes, will lead to an increase in violence, and it is unlikely to be the means to achieve a lasting solution for any problem.

The Security Council, charged with maintaining international peace and security, is the sole body that can authorize the use of force, and it is the international community's mechanism for collective security, intended to protect the common interest rather than that of an individual or a specific group. The unilateral use of force, ignoring the Council's jurisdiction, is therefore difficult to accept, because it undermines the foundations of the civilized coexistence of States in the modern world.

For Peru, full adherence to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which govern the international system, is fundamental — not only in words, but in deeds. Respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of all States continues to be the essential principle of the Charter. The juridical organization that the international community has managed to build, with great effort, to avoid war and combine our work for peace and for the benefit of all humanity, must be preserved, since the consequences of a weakening of the role of international law in relations between States would be extremely serious.

We agree with the priority that the Secretary-General gives to measures to prevent international conflicts. We also agree with him about the need for peace agreements to have the necessary economic support. A concrete case is the peace agreements between Peru and Ecuador, which are specifically mentioned in the report. Under these comprehensive agreements, economic integration and the development of joint projects are essential. They constitute a modern formula that is not limited to resolving pending problems from the past, but contains original elements for the protection of the environment, free navigation in rivers, reductions in tariffs and liberalization of trade, confidence-building measures and an extensive border integration agreement, with projects worth $3 billion to be carried out over 10 years.

The populations of the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border areas, with high poverty levels, have placed their hopes on the "peace dividend" and solidly on the resources that could be obtained from the international community for the binational development plan for the border region at the meeting of the Consultative Group for the Reinforcement of the Peace, to be held in Paris next 29 and 30 November.

My country wishes to underline the importance of international cooperation for development with regard to security, and regrets that the basic funds of the principal agencies providing aid to developing countries continue to show negative growth; that will substantially affect the neediest countries where there are often security problems, basically because of a lack of resources for bare necessities.

Peru strongly agrees that the elimination of poverty should be considered one of the important goals of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. As the sole international organization whose mandate includes peace, security, development and human rights, the United Nations is exceptionally qualified to tackle that goal globally. In this sense, we hail the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination in drafting the action plan against poverty and sending it in October 1998 to all United Nations resident coordinators and country teams. We hope that this plan will contribute to achieving the goal of reducing absolute poverty by 50 per cent before 2015. Peru has drawn up a strategy for the reduction of poverty that has allowed us to restrain, stabilize and then reduce poverty; extreme poverty in Peru was reduced from 27 per cent to 14 per cent between 1990 and 1997.

Finally, Peru is pleased that there is an ever greater and more effective coordination between all United Nations bodies with regard to the elimination of poverty, and that there is an adequate follow-up to the agreements reached at conferences on social development convened by the United Nations. In this context, we support the link proposed in the report between the subjects of peace and development.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): I would like to place on record my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and thoughtful report on the work of the Organization this year (A/54/1).

At this late hour I would like to comment briefly on just two aspects. As the President suggested in his summing up of the general debate last Saturday, the subject of humanitarian intervention, which is addressed in the report and which the Secretary-General made the major theme of his statement at the beginning of the general debate, has provoked a good deal of discussion.

Many participants in the general debate, including my Foreign Minister, The Right Honourable Don McKinnon, commented upon the Secretary-General's argument concerning the need to reconcile universal legitimacy and effectiveness in defence of human rights. It was my Minister's clear view that the Security Council had a duty to take appropriate action when confronted with humanitarian disasters, including genocide and the most serious crimes against humanity, and that such action should never be held hostage to the veto.

Massive abuses of human rights, whether in Rwanda in 1994, or in Kosovo earlier this year, or in the terror unleashed on the population of East Timor after they had exercised their free choice in the United Nations ballot at the end of August, have the potential to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security and are the proper business of the Council.

Notwithstanding this, a good deal has been said over the last two weeks about national sovereignty versus the right of humanitarian intervention. For my delegation this is a sterile debate and one that unfortunately has taken on much of the baggage of the North-South stand-off which bedevils so much of our work here. No useful conclusion is likely to come of it.

The way ahead is rarely illuminated by antagonism, and particularly not by disputation between one highly abstract concept and another. We would rather put our faith in the common sense and compassion of the people who are ultimately responsible for sending us here — our respective publics. In this age of rapidly increasing interconnectedness, there is a much wider awareness of events around the globe. Publics demand that their Governments act through the Security Council if necessary to try to put a stop to outrageous, wide-scale abuses of human rights, wherever they may occur. And if the Security Council fails to act, it does indeed risk losing its reason for being in the eyes of our publics. It becomes irrelevant. This is the political reality.

The challenge for us at the United Nations is to ensure that the Charter is implemented in such a way as to meet the realistic — and, I would underline, realistic — expectations of "We the peoples", in whose name the Charter is written.

Finally, and on quite a different aspect of the Secretary-General's report, I would like to compliment him on his account of the management of change in the Organization over the past year. We are fully supportive of the Secretary-General's efforts, which have already delivered tangible improvements in the overall management of the United Nations, and we look forward to continued development of the results-based budget approach, including the prototype budget to be submitted shortly.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) *(spoke in Arabic)*: We are discussing today one of the most important items on the agenda of this session: the report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization. It deals with humanitarian challenges, and we would like to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for the interest he has paid to this topic. We believe that the review of the events of the past year and of the activities of the Organization provides ample material for more serious debate among Member States.

The humanitarian situations that we face from time to time and that cause tragedies and suffering for human beings go beyond the borders of one State and are caused by several factors. Sometimes they result from natural disasters and at other times from man-made disasters.

The latter are known as conflicts or disputes and can be classified as follows: first, conflicts inside a State caused by another State; secondly, conflicts caused by rebel groups inside States; thirdly, complicated conflicts that involve several countries in the region and are fanned by external elements; and, finally, conflicts within States where there is no Government or central authority.

These conflicts and the differences between them make it imperative for us to find different ways to deal with and find solutions for them. We have to adopt a comprehensive approach to deal with all the root causes, especially the main sources of social and economic backwardness. We should not concentrate on force as a means of solving disputes. It would not be reasonable for us to use force in a conflict caused by a rebel group, an outlaw group, within a State that has a Government and a central authority, because equal measures would thus have been applied in cases that were unequal in terms of law or logic.

My delegation feels that the international community should concentrate on supporting and promoting regional efforts to resolve disputes through peaceful means. We believe that if the political will exists on the part of the international community, particularly of the large countries, it would then lead to the resolution of conflicts and would enable us to avoid human tragedies. It would also spare us the evil and dangers of intervention by force, about which many countries have expressed reservations in view of its contravention of two important principles of international law that have governed international relations for over five decades: respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and safety of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

How can we justify absolute humanitarian intervention when we are still debating the question from three different viewpoints? One kind of intervention in humanitarian situations is based on the subjective considerations of some powerful countries; another kind is based on the selective use of force, depending on whether or not an important situation affects national interests; and in yet other cases, force is used only if there is a need to deal with a humanitarian disaster.

In all three cases there is the danger that a political decision might be influenced by media coverage of humanitarian crises. Perhaps the crisis in Somalia is a good example of this risk.

Images of hungry children prompted the Administration of President George Bush to send American forces to Mogadishu to help distribute food. However, the Administration of President Clinton had to withdraw those forces months later, when American citizens were exposed to images of a dead American Ranger being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. What was the outcome of that intervention? It was more chaos, violence and the disintegration of the State.

Some officials in these powerful countries have blatantly said that in an age of information and technology we can regard television — particularly Cable News Network (CNN) — as the sixteenth member of the Security Council. These same officials have apparently forgotten that CNN also carried the missile attack against the Al-Shifah pharmaceutical plant in my country as soon as the aggression took place. The Council had not even begun to discuss the consequences of that aggression — particularly the humanitarian consequences of that unjustified and unilateral action, which went beyond the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law and humanitarian law. Some believe that virtue is their exclusive purview.

In light of what I have said, it becomes clear that the Secretary-General's review of the concept of humanitarian security still needs more debate, discussion and research. We are fully convinced that the General Assembly, being the most representative and democratic of forums, is the ultimate body to assume this task until consensus is reached. Without this, we cannot see any way of implementing that concept.

In this regard, I would like to refer to what my country's Minister for External relations told the Assembly last week:

> "We share the Secretary-General's concern on this matter. We reaffirm the importance of maximizing collective efforts to eliminate the causes of conflicts before they erupt and of using all available means to put an end to them.
>
> "We believe, however, that any actions taken or means used must have the consent and agreement of the State concerned and must be within the framework of international laws and standards, particularly those of the United Nations Charter." *(A/54/PV.19)*

An absolute call to interfere in the internal affairs of States outside these frameworks, and in the absence of an international, just, democratic and transparent system, means ushering in an age of chaos and of the hegemony of the powerful over the weak.

I would also like to refer to the fact that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), has summarized the fears of small and vulnerable countries with regard to humanitarian intervention by saying that they are very

sensitive about anything having to do with their sovereignty; not only because this represents their last line of defence against the laws of an unjust world, but also because they do not participate effectively in the adoption of Security Council resolutions or in the monitoring of their implementation.

There are other aspects in the report of the Secretary-General on which we would like to comment. These include the humanitarian questions that arise as a consequence of natural disasters and armed conflicts, as well as questions of refugee problems and globalization and its consequences.

With regard to humanitarian questions, we appreciate the fact that the report dealt with the response to similar appeals by agencies. However, it is a cause of concern that the response to those appeals represented only an estimated 31.6 per cent of the financing for the needs of 1999 and was subsequently rejected. While we appreciate the difficult situation that made it inevitable to meet the humanitarian needs in south-eastern Europe, this does not justify the decline in assistance to other regions with urgent humanitarian situations, particularly those in Africa. We share the feelings of grief and sadness expressed by the Secretary-General with regard to the declining response to crises in Africa. We hope that the response by the international community, and the donor community in particular, will be based on equity and equality, and with no discrimination between one region and another, since the humanitarian condition represents the common denominator of all regions.

A continued selective and preferential approach in the level of response to one region or another, with regard to humanitarian situations in the world, would only subject the concept of humanitarian security and forceful intervention to humanitarian justifications and to doubts about the credibility of the real motives and objectives. This has lead some of us to fear that it was being carried out only to achieve the national or strategic interests of some countries.

The second question we would like to discuss in connection with the report of the Secretary-General deals with the provision of assistance to refugees. It is gratifying to note that, in contrast to previous years, 1998 and the beginning of 1999 did not witness many flows of refugees or displacements of persons. In paragraph 215 of the report there is reference to the fact that the majority of Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan were able to return voluntarily to their homes in 1998.

Paragraph 214 refers to the fact that the armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea led to new and large displacements of refugees in the Horn of Africa. In this connection, we would like to refer to the initiative of the OAU to hold the first ministerial meeting in Khartoum last December to discuss the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons. That meeting was attended by all Member States of the OAU, the United Nations and volunteer organizations and agencies. The meeting discussed all facets of the problem in order to deal with its root causes and to provide appropriate conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. The ministerial meeting adopted a declaration and many recommendations in the hope that the international community would help to provide the necessary support to implement these recommendations and ultimately find permanent solutions to the problem.

Finally, we would like to express our support for the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General on the various challenges caused by globalization. Individual States cannot face those challenges alone. The situation calls for multilateral cooperation. We are fully convinced that the United Nations, as the most representative and democratic of international organizations, remains the international forum most qualified to deal with the effects of globalization in the economic, social and environmental areas, as well as with questions of equality and fairness between the sexes.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): In his speech the Secretary-General opened a Pandora's box full of crucial questions, a courageous and timely gesture. He has openly brought to the surface the already obvious clash between the principles of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention — a disturbing but unavoidable dilemma.

It is true that respect for sovereignty is an essential basic principle in international relations. We all agree. It is no less a moral imperative — and a legal imperative — that we react to massive and brutal violations of human rights. Many of us agree on this as well. Consequently, it would seem obvious that when these two principles collide — when there is a humanitarian catastrophe within a State, for example — humanitarian intervention should come under the legal umbrella — that is, it should not take place on the fringe of international legality.

In other words, the so-called right of interference should be authorized or supported by the Security Council; many of us would agree with this. But — and

this is the troubling issue raised by the Secretary-General's statement — what happens when the Security Council is paralysed, for one reason or another? Should the international community be resigned, in the twenty-first century, to standing idly by in the face of a flagrant atrocity caused by the use of the veto by one of its members? Should the collective indignation of humankind be stifled by the scrupulous respect of the principle of sovereignty or by the obstructing will of a single country? Can the absolute and unfailing respect of sovereignty on one hand, or the sometimes selfish will of a single Power on the other, silence the outcry of the international community when it is inclined to take action?

These are questions of critical importance for international security, for the common interest of humankind and, of course, for the very future of the United Nations. The Assembly should be able to find solutions.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.